

***What is claimed is:***

Sub A1

1. A method for providing rich media content to a user over a  
2 computer network, comprising the steps of:  
3 determining the user's ability to playback said rich media content  
4 locally;  
5 providing the user with a version of said rich media content  
6 appropriate for said user's ability to playback said rich media content locally;  
7 loading said rich media content into a local cache of the user; and  
8 displaying said rich media content from the user's local cache after  
9 said rich media content has been completely loaded.

1 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said determining step  
2 is transparent to the user.

1 3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step is  
2 transparent to the user.

1 4. A method according to claim 1, wherein said loading step is  
2 ~~transparent to the user.~~

1 5. A method according to claim 1, wherein said determining step  
2 is automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

1 6. A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step is  
2 automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

1 7. A method according to claim 1, wherein said loading step is  
2 automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

1 8. A method according to claim 1, wherein said displaying step is  
2 automatic and requires no initiation by the user.

1           9.     A method according to claim 1, wherein said determining step  
2 comprises the step of progressing through a set of preferred rich media content  
3 playback applications to assess the user's ability to playback said rich media  
4 content locally.

1           10.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step  
2 comprises the step of generating a script for said rich media content  
3 compatible with the user's ability to playback said rich media content locally.

1           11.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step  
2 further comprises the step of selecting said appropriate version of said rich  
3 media content from a set of available versions of said rich media content.

1           12.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said displaying step  
2 comprises the step of displaying said rich media content in a designated  
3 display area on a local display of the user's.

1           13.    A method according to claim 12, wherein said designated  
2 display area includes controls for manipulating said rich media content.

1           14.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said rich media  
2 content comprises a video clip.

1           15.    A method according to claim 14, wherein said video clip is up  
2 to 15 seconds long.

1           16.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said rich media  
2 content comprises an advertisement.

1           17.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said rich media  
2 content is provided to the user as a highly compressed digital file.

1           18.    A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:  
2           enabling the user to forward said rich media content to another user on  
3           the computer network.

1           19.    A method according to claim 18, wherein the user is  
2           encouraged to forward said rich media content to another user.

1           20.    A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache  
2           resides on a desktop computer connected to the computer network.

1           21.    A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache  
2           resides on a laptop computer connected to the computer network.

1           22.    A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache  
2           resides on a handheld device connected to the computer network.

1           23.    A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache  
2           resides on a telephone connected to the computer network.

1           24.    A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache  
2           resides on a set top box connected to the computer network.

1           25.    A method according to claim 1, wherein the user's local cache  
2           resides on an Internet appliance connected to the computer network.

1           26.    A method according to claim 1, wherein said providing step  
2           comprises providing said rich media content to the user over a wireless  
3           computer network.

1           27.    A system for providing rich media content to a user over a  
2 computer network, comprising:

- 3           (a)    means for determining the user's ability to playback said rich  
4 media content locally;  
5           (b)    means for providing the user with a version of said rich media  
6 content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities;  
7           (c)    means for loading said rich media content into a local cache of  
8 the user; and  
9           (d)    means for displaying said rich media content from the user's  
10 local cache after said rich media content has been completely  
11 loaded.

1           28.    A system for providing rich media content to a user over a  
2 computer network, comprising:

- 3           (a)    means for determining the user's ability to playback said rich  
4 media content locally;  
5           (b)    means for providing the user with a version of said rich media  
6 content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities  
7 capable of being loaded into a local cache of the user and  
8 displayed from the user's local cache after said rich media  
9 content has been completely loaded.

1           29.    A computer program product, comprising a computer useable  
2 medium having computer program logic stored therein, wherein said computer  
3 program logic enables a computer to provide rich media content to a user over  
4 a computer network comprising:

- 5           (a)    means for determining the user's ability to playback said rich  
6 media content locally;  
7           (b)    means for providing the user with a version of said rich media  
8 content appropriate for the user's local playback capabilities;  
9           (c)    means for loading said rich media content into a local cache of  
10 the user; and

11 (d) means for displaying said rich media content from the user's  
12 local cache after said rich media content has been completely  
13 loaded.

1 30. A method for providing short, highly compressed rich media  
2 content to a user over a computer network, comprising the steps of:

3 (a) automatically and transparently determining the user's ability  
4 to playback said rich media content locally;

5 (b) automatically and transparently providing the user with a  
6 version of said rich media content appropriate for the user's  
7 local playback capabilities;

8 (c) automatically and transparently loading said rich media content  
9 into a local cache of the user;

10 (d) automatically displaying in a designated display area on the  
11 user's local display said rich media content from the user's  
12 local cache after said rich media content has been completely  
13 loaded; and

14 (e) enabling the user to forward said rich media content to another  
15 user.